

recognizes any longer the limits of consideration for human life and of moral standards. It seems that there is nothing left except the war of all against all."

And to what ultimate end? Will nothing make real to us the abomination of utter desolation which Bomber Command is preparing for post-war Europe? The *National News-Letter* of July 5, 1943, warned its readers: "When the clouds of war have passed there will be terrible devastation in Germany—both physical and moral." *The Spectator* added on July 30, 1943:

"We shall not know until we occupy Germany just how

much damage our raids have done; for while our photographs told the truth, it is always less than the truth, and what we have repeatedly found when we occupied enemy sites in Africa and Sicily justifies our assuming that the understatement is considerable."

It is hardly surprising that Mr. John Masefield, the Poet Laureate, warned his hearers in a speech at the annual luncheon of the National Book Council on October 26, 1943: "Europe totters on the brink of a dark time which may conceivably be the darkest time the world has ever known."

American Postscript (to Britain's article)

By JOHN NEVIN SAYRE

Various measures have been suggested for alleviating the horror and cruelty of massacre by bombing. Although none of them can be thoroughly satisfactory to pacifists, who from their standpoint must abjure the whole war method, yet as in the case of the blockade, pacifists may without abatement of opposition to war support plans designed to lessen war's damage to children and civilians. We have supported the limited feeding operations allowed in Greece, the relief work formerly permitted to the Quakers in France, the proposals of Mr. Hoover's Committee to extend such work to the little countries of Europe, the Taft-Gillette Bill, etc. Today, in the matter of bombing we call attention to a number of proposals which appear to have merit.

Among them are agreements to refrain from bombing "open towns." President Roosevelt on September 1, 1939 addressed an "urgent appeal to every government which may be engaged in hostilities publicly to affirm its determination that its armed forces shall in no event, and under no circumstances, undertake the bombardment from the air of civilian populations or of unfortified cities, upon the understanding that these same rules of warfare will be scrupulously observed by all of their opponents." Again on September 18, and on December 1, he reiterated this appeal. On May 1, 1940 he said to the American Red Cross:

"The bombing of helpless and unprotected civilians is a tragedy which has aroused the horror of all mankind. I recall with pride that the United States consistently has taken the lead in urging that this inhuman practice be prohibited. I am glad that the International Red Cross, at its meeting in London in 1938, urged that joint steps be taken by the governments to prevent such outrages in the future."

Holding to this line, the United States a few weeks after Pearl Harbor withdrew General MacArthur and our High Commissioner of the Philippines from Manila, asking the Japanese to regard it as an undefended city and refrain from its bombardment—an appeal which in the main they respected. Before that, the Nazis in 1940 had treated Paris as an open city, respecting the declaration of the French Government about it, although at that time they were masters of the air in that region. But today, when we have preponderant air power, shall we forget this? As the *News-Chronicle* said in a statement on August 10, 1943, "Do we wish to acknowledge our inability to reach even their standards?"

A variant proposal to "open towns" is that of the *Bombing Restriction Committee* in Great Britain for "sanctuary

areas." The gist of it is given in the following memorandum:

"Humanitarian considerations demand the recognition by the belligerents of sanctuary areas to which women and aged people could be evacuated from all towns having any kind of military objective in advance of bombing. In such sanctuary areas non-combatants could live free from the oppression of fear—fear for their own lives and for the safety and well-being of their children. Such sanctuary areas would be especially beneficial to invalids and people of highly nervous temperament who suffer agonies of apprehension if they have not the financial means to travel a long distance to get away from the threatened area.

"The sanctuary areas should be located, if possible, within 100 to 150 kilometres of the Ruhr and of the great industrial cities in other parts. It would be an advantage to include towns which have no military establishments or munition works and are situated on unimportant railway lines which do not carry military traffic; such towns, for instance, as Bonn, Homburg, Baden, Heidelberg, and other university towns and health resorts. In Italy there would be no difficulty in finding non-industrial towns to act as the centers of sanctuary areas.

"To assure the complete absence of military preparations and personnel from the sanctuary areas a corps of observers composed of the nationals of neutral countries could be formed. It could be placed under the control of the International Red Cross, or of a neutral commission on which the Vatican would be represented. The Spanish Civil War provides an example of a corps of neutral observers, working on the whole satisfactorily."

Details are added giving suggestions by which such sanctuary areas could be made recognizable from the air.

Of course objections can be raised to proposals like the above, but one suspects that the basic difficulty, at present, lies in the depth of spiritual demoralization to which our nations have sunk and that our responsible leaders could devise some amelioration of the devastating effect of bombing on children and civilians, had they the will to do so.

This situation is pregnant with further horror in the temptation, perhaps to Germany and certainly to the United States in the Pacific, to go in for poison gas operations. That we are near the edge of such a development is suggested by several articles appearing recently in the press, which may be trial balloons. *Newsweek* on December 20, carried an article by Ernest K. Lindley, well known Washington columnist entitled, "Thoughts on the Use of Gas in Warfare." The article opens with these ominous paragraphs:

"A week ago Admiral Pratt wrote on the lessons of Tarawa. To his conclusions this lay reporter feels impelled.

after extensive inquiry, to add one assertion: that the use of gas would have enabled us to capture Tarawa almost without a casualty.

"If the tons of bombs dropped on Tarawa from the air had been heavy gas, of the mustard type, the island would have been so thoroughly drenched that in all probability not a defender would have survived. After four or five days, giving time for the gas to evaporate, the Marines could have walked ashore without opposition. In the end, every Jap on Tarawa was killed or committed suicide anyway, except a handful of laborers and a few soldiers captured while unconscious from wounds. But the victory cost us, in dead and wounded, several thousand of our most valiant youth.

"In a drive across the Central Pacific, the use of gas would expedite our progress and diminish our casualties. Any small area that can be segregated is ideal for the use of gas. The small islands of the Pacific fit the prescription. We have the transportation capacity, in planes—supplemented if necessary by naval bombardment—to smother most of these island outposts of Japan with gas."

The *Montreal Daily Star* on December 23 printed a Washington dispatch in one paragraph of which Major General William N. Porter, chief of the chemical warfare service was quoted as saying:

"If we get a good hard smack from an enemy employing gas, we may change our minds about using it and gain tremendous advantage by employing our resources for waging chemical warfare. If gas warfare started, we believe we would be able to spring a big surprise."

Although the article reports President Roosevelt as determined not to resort to gas unless the Japanese or Germans use it first, it often happens in war, riots, etc., that a mistake is made in believing that the other side has started something diabolical when in fact this is not the case, but an accident, or other untoward circumstance, has lighted the fuse of fear and suspicion which set reprisals and counter-reprisals going. Or it might not be difficult, in a pinch, to arrange some kind of a "frame up" which made it appear that the enemy had employed poison gas against us. Even this might not be necessary in view of the

outburst of hatred which broke loose after the War Department's release of the story of Japanese mistreatment of captured American soldiers. "Poison gas," it could be said, "is a justifiable measure of retribution." And public opinion might be further brought around by propaganda to the effect that anyway most Japs kill themselves rather than submit to capture so if we destroy them suddenly with poison gas, it will mercifully shorten the time of their dying and save innumerable lives of our own soldiers. We might experiment by smothering with gas an "island outpost," but once started down this road what moral scruples would stop us from trying to smother Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, or any other cities that we picked as targets?

Are the churches and the Christian conscience so much in pawn to military strategy that they will surrender everything to the latter? Churchill told Parliament, "There are ... no lengths in violence to which we will not go."³³ Christ said, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Which leader today will the churches follow?

While this essay has dealt, in the main, with only one phase of modern warfare, we do not for a moment consider that a Christian conscience which is alive can be appeased by the establishment of "open towns" and areas of refuge, by the prohibition of poison gas, or by other "humanitarian" rules of war. These things conscience should press for, while at the same time it uses the deeds of war to persuade men of the total incompatibility of the whole war method with the Christian religion and ethic.

The only right alternative to the mass murders that go with the blockade, bombing and invasion of a continent is willingness on the part of the United Nations to make an undictated and creative peace on the basis of equality of all peoples. That, in the last analysis, is what we must continue to struggle for, if we would not see civilization perish in the flames.

³³ Address to Parliament, September 21, 1943. ✓

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